



## U.S. recommends 'pause' for J&J shots in blow to vaccine drive

By ZEKE MILLER, LAURAN NEERGAARD and MATTHEW PER-  
RONE

Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The U.S. on Tuesday recommended a "pause" in using the single-dose Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine to investigate reports of rare but potentially dangerous blood clots, setting off a chain reaction worldwide and dealing a setback to the global vaccination campaign.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration announced that they were investigating unusual clots in six women between the ages of 18 and 48. One person died.

The acting FDA commissioner expected the pause to last only a matter of days. But the decision triggered swift action in Europe and elsewhere as the drugmaker and regulators moved to halt the use of the J&J vaccine, at least for now. Hundreds of thousands of doses were due to arrive in European countries this week. The European Union has been plagued by supply shortages, logistical problems and concerns over blood clots in a small number of people who received the AstraZeneca vaccine.

Any slowdown in the dissemination of the shots could have broad implications for the global vaccination effort.



In this April 1, 2021, file photo, people walk in to get their COVID-19 vaccine at the Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Plaza past a sign that says "Johnson & Johnson vaccine only" in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

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## U.S. recommends 'pause' for J&J shots in blow to vaccine drive

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The J&J vaccine held immense promise because its single-dose regimen and relatively simple storage requirements would make it easier to use, especially in less affluent countries.

The clots, which happened 6 to 13 days after vaccination in veins that drain blood from the brain, occurred together with low platelets, the fragments in blood that normally form clots.

More than 6.8 million doses of the J&J vaccine have been given in the U.S., the vast majority with no or mild side effects.

Seth Shockley of Indianapolis received the J&J vaccine Sunday and was initially worried when he heard about the potential side effects Tuesday. But his concerns faded when he learned there were only six confirmed cases of blood clots.

"I would much rather take the risk with the vaccine — a much smaller risk — than to risk it with COVID," he said. Now he's more worried that the reports could result in more people refusing to get vaccinated.

The FDA said the cases under investigation appear similar to the clots that European authorities say are possibly linked to the AstraZeneca vaccine, which is not yet cleared in the U.S. European regulators have stressed that the AstraZeneca risk appears to be lower than the possibility of developing clots from birth control pills.

Federally run mass vaccination sites will pause the use of the J&J shot, and states and other providers are expected to follow. But authorities stressed they have found no signals of clot problems with the most



In this March 31, 2021, file photo, a nurse fills a syringe with Johnson & Johnson's one-dose COVID-19 vaccine at the Vaxmobile, at the Uniondale Hempstead Senior Center, in Uniondale, N.Y.

widely used COVID-19 vaccines in the U.S. — from Moderna and Pfizer.

"I'd like to stress these events appear to be extremely rare. However COVID-19 vaccine safety is a top priority," acting FDA Commissioner Janet Woodcock said at a news conference.

Speaking at the White House, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top expert on infectious disease, said the pause would allow the FDA and the CDC to investigate the clotting cases "to try and understand some of the mechanisms" and "to make physicians more aware of this."

A CDC committee will meet Wednesday to discuss the cases, and the FDA has also launched an investigation into the cause of the clots and low platelet counts.

FDA officials emphasized that Tuesday's action was not a mandate. Doctors

and patients could still use J&J's vaccine if they decide its benefits outweigh its risks for individual cases, said Dr. Peter Marks.

The agencies recommend that people who were given the J&J vaccine should contact their doctor if they experience severe headache, abdominal pain, leg pain, or shortness of breath within three weeks.

J&J said in a statement that it was aware of the reports of blood clots, but that no link to its vaccine had been established.

The company also said it would delay the rollout of its vaccine in Europe as a precaution.

U.S. health authorities cautioned doctors against using a typical clot treatment, the blood-thinner heparin. European authorities investigating the AstraZeneca cases have concluded clots appear to be similar to a very rare abnormal immune response that some-

times strikes people treated with heparin, leading to a temporary clotting disorder.

While it's not clear yet if the reports among J&J recipients are related, doctors would treat these kinds of unusual clots like they treat people who have the heparin reaction — with different kinds of blood thinners and sometimes an antibody infusion, said Dr. Geoffrey Barnes, a clot expert at the University of Michigan.

Even without J&J's vaccine, White House officials said they remain on track to have enough supplies to vaccinate most American adults by the summer.

"We believe there's enough vaccine in the system — Moderna and Pfizer — for all Americans who want to get vaccinated by May 31 to do so," said Jeff Zients, the White House's COVID-19 response coordinator.

Asked if the government was overreacting to six cases out of more than 6 million vaccinations, the CDC's Dr. Anne Schuchat said recommendations will come quickly.

Because these unusual clots require special treatment, "it was of the utmost importance to us to get the word out," she said.

"That said, the pandemic is quite severe and cases are increasing in lots of places and vaccination's critical."

The J&J vaccine received emergency use authorization from the FDA in late February with great fanfare. Yet the shot only makes up a small fraction of the doses administered in the U.S. J&J has been plagued by production delays and manufacturing errors at the Baltimore plant of a contractor.

Last week, the drugmaker took over the facility to scale up production in hopes of meeting its commitment to the U.S. government of providing about 100 million doses by the end of May.

At the Green Wave Pharmacy in rural Clintwood, Virginia, many customers have specifically requested the J&J vaccine. Pharmacist Sheryl Pientka said the pharmacy in the Appalachian Mountains serves low-income and elderly people who prefer to get one shot instead of two.

Although the pharmacy has Moderna vaccines in stock, some elderly and homebound customers may wait for the J&J shot to get cleared for use again, Pientka said.

"It's a very small town where everyone knows everyone else, so people say, 'I know so-and-so got the vaccine. If she doesn't have a problem, then I'll go get it,'" she said. □

Associated Press



# U.S. to withdraw all troops from Afghanistan by Sept. 11

By **LOLITA C. BALDOR** and **ELLEN KNICKMEYER**

**Associated Press**

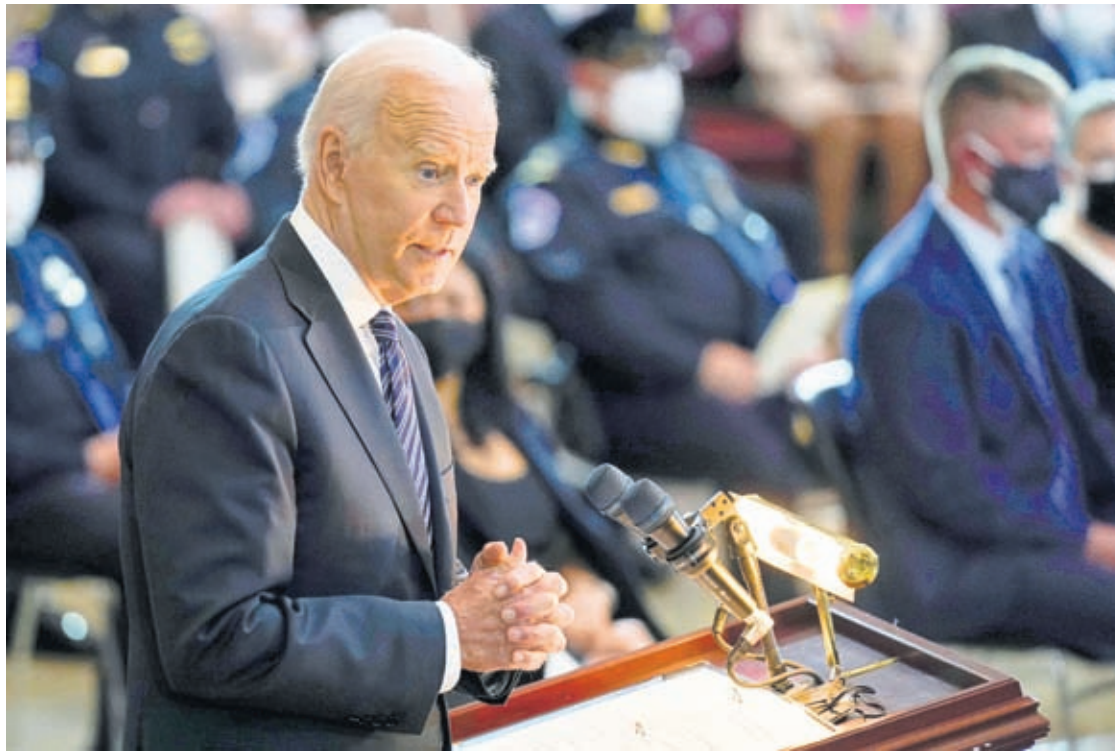
**WASHINGTON (AP)** — President Joe Biden will withdraw all U.S. troops from Afghanistan by Sept. 11, the 20th anniversary of the terrorist attacks on America that were coordinated from that country, several U.S. officials said Tuesday. The decision defies a May 1 deadline for full withdrawal under a peace agreement the Trump administration reached with the Taliban last year, but leaves no room for additional extensions. A senior administration official called the September date an absolute deadline that won't be affected by security conditions in the country.

While Biden's decision keeps U.S. troops in Afghanistan four months longer than initially planned, it sets a firm end to two decades of war that killed more than 2,200 U.S. troops, wounded 20,000, and cost as much as \$1 trillion. The conflict largely crippled al-Qaida and led to the death of Osama bin Laden, the architect of the Sept. 11 attacks. But an American withdrawal also risks many of the gains made in democracy, women's rights and governance, while ensuring that the Taliban, who provided al-Qaida's safe haven, remain strong and in control of large swaths of the country.

Biden has been hinting for weeks that he was going to let the May deadline lapse, and as the days went by it became clear that an orderly withdrawal of the roughly 2,500 remaining troops would be difficult and was unlikely. The administration official said the drawdown would begin by May 1.

Biden's choice of the 9/11 date underscores the reason that American troops were in Afghanistan to begin with — to prevent extremist groups like al-Qaida from establishing a foothold again that could be used to launch attacks against the U.S.

The administration official said Biden decided that the



**President Joe Biden speaks during a ceremony to honor slain U.S. Capitol Police officer William "Billy" Evans as he lies in honor at the Capitol in Washington, Tuesday, April 13, 2021.**

**Associated Press**

withdrawal deadline had to be absolute, rather than based on conditions on the ground. "We're committing today to going to zero" U.S. forces by Sept. 11, and possibly well before, the official said, adding that Biden concluded that a conditioned withdrawal would be "a recipe for staying in Afghanistan forever."

Defense officials and commanders had argued against the May 1 deadline, saying the U.S. troop withdrawal should be based on security conditions in Afghanistan, including Taliban attacks and violence.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Biden will deliver remarks on Wednesday "on the way forward in Afghanistan, including his plans and timeline for withdrawing U.S. troops." She didn't provide details, but said during a White House briefing that Biden "has been consistent in his view that there is not a military solution to Afghanistan, that we have been there for far too long."

Several U.S. officials confirmed Biden's withdrawal decision to The Associated Press, and an administration official provided details to reporters on condition of anonymity, speaking ahead of the announcement.

According to the adminis-

tration official, the only U.S. forces remaining in Afghanistan will be those needed to protect diplomats there. No exact number was provided, but American troop totals in Afghanistan have been understated by U.S. administrations for years. Officials have quietly acknowledged that there are hundreds more in Afghanistan than the official 2,500 number, and likely would include special operations forces conducting covert or counterterrorism missions, often working with intelligence agency personnel.

Biden's new, extended timeline will allow a safe and orderly withdrawal of American troops in coordination with NATO allies, the administration official added.

The president's decision, however, risks retaliation by the Taliban on U.S. and Afghan forces, possibly escalating the 20-year war. And it will reignite political division over America's involvement in what many have called the endless war.

An intelligence community report issued Tuesday about global challenges for the next year said prospects for a peace deal in Afghanistan are "low" and warned that "the Taliban is likely to make gains on the battlefield. If the co-

alition withdraws support, the report says, the Afghan government will struggle to control the Taliban.

Congressional reaction to the new deadline was mixed. "Precipitously withdrawing U.S. forces from Afghanistan is a grave mistake," said Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. "It is retreat in the face of an enemy that has not yet been vanquished and abdication of American leadership."

Sen. Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma, the ranking Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, slammed it as a "reckless and dangerous decision." He said any withdrawal should be conditions-based, adding that arbitrary deadlines could put troops in danger, create a breeding ground for terrorists and lead to civil war in Afghanistan.

Democrats were generally more supportive. Sen. Jack Reed, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, said Trump's May 1 deadline limited Biden's options. "We still have vital interests in protecting against terrorist attacks that could be emanating from that part of the world, but there are other areas, too, we have to be conscious of," Reed said.

Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., said troops should come home, and the U.S. must refocus

American national security on more pressing challenges. But at least one senior Democrat expressed disappointment. Sen. Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire said in a tweet that the U.S. "has sacrificed too much to bring stability to Afghanistan to leave w/o verifiable assurances of a secure future."

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahed told The Associated Press that the religious militia is waiting for a formal announcement to issue its reaction. The Taliban previously warned the U.S. of "consequences" if it reneged on the May 1 deadline.

In a February 2020 agreement with the administration of President Donald Trump, the Taliban agreed to halt attacks and hold peace talks with the Afghan government, in exchange for a U.S. commitment to a complete withdrawal by May 2021.

Over the past year, U.S. military commanders and defense officials have said that attacks on U.S. troops have largely paused, but that Taliban attacks on the Afghans increased. Commanders have argued that the Taliban have failed to meet the conditions of the peace agreement by continuing attacks on the Afghans and failing to totally cut ties with al-Qaida and other extremist groups.

When Biden entered the White House in January, he was keenly aware of the looming deadline and had time to meet it if he had chosen to do so. He began a review of the February 2020 agreement shortly after taking office, and has been consulting at length with his defense advisers and allies.

In recent weeks, it became increasingly clear that he was leaning toward defying the deadline.

"It's going to be hard to meet the May 1 deadline," Biden said in March. "Just in terms of tactical reasons, it's hard to get those troops out." He added, "And if we leave, we're going to do so in a safe and orderly way." □



# Cop, police chief resign 2 days after Black motorist's death

By **MOHAMED IBRAHIM** and **MIKE HOUSEHOLDER**

Associated Press

**BROOKLYN CENTER, Minn.**

**(AP)** — A white police officer who fatally shot a Black man during a traffic stop in a Minneapolis suburb resigned Tuesday, as did the city's police chief — moves that the mayor said he hoped would help heal the community and lead to reconciliation after two nights of protests and unrest.

The resignations from Officer Kim Potter and Police Chief Tim Gannon came two days after the death of 20-year-old Daunte Wright in Brooklyn Center. Potter, a 26-year veteran, had been on administrative leave following Sunday's shooting, which happened as the Minneapolis area was already on edge over the trial of the first of four police officers in George Floyd's death. Brooklyn Center Mayor Mike Elliott said he was "appreciative" that Potter submitted her resignation but that he had not asked for it nor accepted it. It wasn't immediately clear what that would mean.

Gannon has said he believed Potter mistakenly grabbed her gun when she was going for her Taser. She can be heard on her body camera video shouting "Taser! Taser!" However, protesters and Wright's family members say there's no excuse for the shooting and it shows how the justice system is tilted against Blacks, noting Wright was stopped for expired car registration and ended up dead.

Elliott said the city had been moving toward firing Potter when she resigned. He said he hoped her resignation would "bring some calm to the community," but that he would keep working towards



This May 31, 2007 photo shows Officer Kim Potter, part of the Brooklyn Center Police negotiation team in Brooklyn Center, Minn.

Associated Press

"full accountability under the law."

"We have to make sure that justice is served, justice is done. Daunte Wright deserves that, his family deserves that," Elliott said.

Activists who attended the news conference called for sweeping changes to the Brooklyn Center Police Department and sharply criticized the acting police chief, Tony Gruenig, for not yet having a plan.

Elliott said the department has about 49 police officers, none of whom live in Brooklyn Center. He said he didn't have information on racial diversity at hand but that "we have very few people of color in our department."

The modest suburb just north of Minneapolis has seen its demographics shift dramatically in recent years. In 2000, more than 70% of the city was white. Today, a majority of residents are Black, Asian or Latino.

Wright was stopped for having expired license plates. Police then tried to arrest him on an outstanding warrant

after failing to appear in court on charges that he fled from officers and possessed a gun without a permit during an encounter with Minneapolis police in June.

Body camera footage released Monday shows Wright struggling with police when an officer shouts, "I'll Tase you! I'll Tase you! Taser! Taser! Taser!" She draws her weapon after the man breaks free from police outside his car and gets back behind the wheel. After firing a single shot from her handgun, the car speeds away, and the officer is heard saying, "Holy (expletive)! I shot him."

Wright died of a gunshot wound to the chest, according to the medical examiner. Protests began within hours. In her one-paragraph letter of resignation, Potter — a 26-year veteran — said, "I have loved every minute of being a police officer and serving this community to the best of my ability, but I believe it is in the best interest of the community, the department, and my fellow officers if I resign immediately."

Wright's father, Aubrey Wright, told ABC's "Good Morning America" on Tuesday that he rejects the explanation that Potter mistook her gun for her Taser.

"I lost my son. He's never coming back. I can't accept that. A mistake? That doesn't even sound right. This officer has been on the force for 26 years. I can't accept that," he said.

Chyna Whitaker, mother of Daunte's son, said at a news conference that she felt police "stole my son's dad from him."

The Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association, the police union, said in a statement Tuesday that "no conclusions should be made until the investigation is complete."

Prosecutors in Hennepin County, where the shooting occurred, said they have referred the case to nearby Washington County -- a practice county attorneys in the Minneapolis area adopted last year in handling police deadly force cases. The Washington County Attorney's of-

fice did not immediately return a request for comment. Elliott, the mayor, called for the governor to move the case to the attorney general to prosecute.

Ben Crump, the Wright family's attorney, spoke outside the Minneapolis courthouse where a fired police officer is on trial in Floyd's death. Crump compared Wright's death to Floyd's, who was pinned down by police when they tried to arrest him for allegedly passing a counterfeit \$20 at a neighborhood market last May.

Daunte Wright "was not a threat to them," Crump said. "Was it the best decision? No. But young people don't always make the best decisions. As his mother said, he was scared."

Potter has experience with investigations into police shootings. She was the police union president and one of the first officers to respond after Brooklyn Center police fatally shot a man who allegedly tried to stab an officer with a knife in 2019, according to a report from the Hennepin County Attorney's Office. After medics arrived, she told the two officers who shot the man to get into separate squad cars, turn off their body cameras, and not to speak to each other. She accompanied two other officers involved in the shooting while investigators interviewed them.

On Monday, hundreds of protesters gathered hours after a dusk-to-dawn curfew was announced by the governor. When protesters wouldn't disperse, police began firing gas canisters and flash-bang grenades, sending clouds wafting over the crowd and chasing some protesters away. Forty people were arrested. Thirteen arrests were made in neighboring Minneapolis, including for burglaries and curfew violations, police said.

In Portland, Oregon, police said a Monday night demonstration over the shooting turned into a riot, with some in the crowd throwing rocks and other projectiles at officers. □





# NATO, U.S. vow support for Ukraine, warn Russia on troops

By MATTHEW LEE and RAF CASERT

Associated Press

**BRUSSELS (AP)** — The United States and NATO on Tuesday expressed strong support for Ukraine and warned Russia against pressing ahead with a major troop buildup along the former Soviet republic's eastern border.

In separate meetings with Ukraine's foreign minister, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg expressed serious concern about Russia deploying the largest concentration of troops near the Ukraine border since 2014.

Blinken accused Russia of taking "very provocative" actions that have alarmed Ukraine and the West. Stoltenberg, meanwhile, called the Russian movements "unjustified, unexplained and deeply concerning." Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said Kyiv welcomed the support and urged Western countries to make clear to Moscow that it would pay a price for its "aggression." The comments came amid a surge of cease-fire violations in eastern Ukraine, where Russia-backed separatists and Ukrainian forces have been locked



Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, left, meets with United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken, right, in Brussels, Tuesday, April 13, 2021.

in a conflict since Moscow's 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula. NATO is holding a special meeting Tuesday on Ukraine.

"The U.S. stands firmly behind the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Ukraine," Blinken told Kuleba at the start of their meeting at the residence of the U.S. ambassador to Belgium, a post once held by Blinken's uncle. "That's particularly important at a time when we were seeing,

unfortunately, Russia take very provocative actions when it comes to Ukraine." Kuleba replied that Ukraine was grateful for the support of the U.S. and NATO, an alliance that Kyiv is looking to join over fierce Russian objections.

"In this struggle, the support of the United States is absolutely crucial and deeply appreciated," Kuleba said. He called Russia's troop build-up "aggressive" and asked the U.S. and others to "make it very clear to

Russia that the price of its aggression against Ukraine will be too heavy for it to bear."

Earlier, at news conference with Kuleba at NATO headquarters, Stoltenberg said the alliance was united in its "unwavering" support for Ukraine. "NATO stands with Ukraine," he said.

"Russia must end this military buildup in and around Ukraine, stop its provocations and de-escalate immediately."

Stoltenberg called Mos-

cow's recent troop deployment the biggest military buildup since the conflict in eastern Ukraine began.

"Russia has moved thousands of combat troops to Ukraine's borders, the largest massing of Russian troops since the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014. Over the last days, several Ukrainian soldiers have been killed in eastern Ukraine," he said.

The Ukrainian foreign minister sounded defiant toward Moscow, and said Ukraine and its Western partners were better prepared than seven years ago.

"Should Moscow take any reckless move or start a new spiral of violence, it will be costly in all senses," Kuleba said.

A special NATO meeting Tuesday on Ukraine would make sure the alliance is not caught unaware, he said.

"By gathering today, we try to avoid the mistake that was made in 2014 when Russia was ready to act swiftly and pursue its military goals," Kuleba said. Ukraine has said Russia has accumulated 41,000 troops at its border with eastern Ukraine and 42,000 more in Crimea. The numbers are likely to grow as the troops keep arriving. □

Associated Press

## Pope asks U.S. bishop to resign after cover-up investigation

**ROME (AP)** — Pope Francis asked a bishop in the U.S. state of Minnesota to resign after he was investigated by the Vatican for allegedly interfering with past investigations into clergy sexual abuse, officials said Tuesday.

The Vatican said Francis accepted the resignation of Crookston Bishop Michael Hoeppner on Tuesday and named a temporary replacement to run the diocese. Hoeppner is 71, four years shy of the normal retirement age for bishops.

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Crookston said in a statement that the pon-

tiff asked Hoeppner to resign following the Vatican probe, which it said arose from reports that the bishop "had at times failed to observe applicable norms when presented with allegations of sexual abuse involving clergy."

The Vatican had tasked St. Paul-Minneapolis Archbishop Bernard Hebda with conducting a preliminary investigation. Last year, Hebda's office announced that the Holy See had authorized a more in-depth probe.

Hoeppner is accused of stating that a priest was fit for ministry despite allegedly knowing the priest had

abused a 16-year-old boy in the early 1970s. The victim, Ron Vasek, later sued the diocese, alleging that Hoeppner blackmailed him into retracting his allegations against Monsignor Roger Grundhaus. The lawsuit was settled for an undisclosed sum in 2017.

Hoeppner was the first bishop known to be investigated by the Vatican under a 2019 law that Francis approved laying out the procedures to conduct preliminary investigations against bishops accused of sex abuse or cover-up. He has said in sworn testimony that he was trying to protect the victim's con-



In this Monday, Nov. 10, 2008 file photo, Bishop Michael J. Hoeppner of Crookston, Minn. prays during a semi-annual meeting of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, in Baltimore.

Associated Press

fidentiality by stating that Grundhaus was fit for ministry. He has said Grundhaus continues to deny Vasek's allegations.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops simultaneously announced Ho-

eppner's resignation and the appointment of the Most Rev. Richard E. Pate, the retired bishop of Des Moines, as a temporary administrator without commenting on the reason for the change. □



# St. Vincent seeks water, funds as volcano keeps erupting

By **KRISTIN DEANE and DÁNICA COTO**

**Associated Press**

**KINGSTOWN, St. Vincent (AP)** — Leaders of volcano-wracked St. Vincent said Tuesday that water is running short as heavy ash contaminates supplies and they estimated that the eastern Caribbean island will need hundreds of millions of dollars to recover from the eruption of La Soufriere.

Between 16,000 to 20,000 people have been evacuated from the island's northern region, where the exploding volcano is located, with more than 3,000 of them staying at more than 80 government shelters.

"We have to get stuff rolling into people," Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves said in a press conference on local station NBC Radio.

But no casualties have been reported since the first big blast from the volcano early Friday. "We have to try and keep that record," he said. Gonsalves said some people have re-



**People collect water not contaminated by volcanic ash after the eruption of La Soufriere volcano in Wallilabou, on the western side of the Caribbean island of St. Vincent, Monday, April 12, 2021.**  
**Associated Press**

fused to leave communities closest to the volcano and urged them to evacuate. He estimated the country will need hundreds of millions of dollars to recover from the eruption, but did not give any details.

Falling ash and pyroclastic flows have destroyed crops and contaminated water reservoirs. Garth Saunders, minister of the island's water and sewer authority, noting that some communities have not yet received

water. "The windward (eastern) coast is our biggest challenge today," he said during the press conference of efforts to deploy water trucks. "What we are providing is a finite amount. We will run out at some

point." The prime minister said people in some shelters need food and water, and he thanked neighboring nations for shipments of items including cots, respiratory masks and water bottles and tanks. In addition, the World Bank has disbursed \$20 million to the government of St. Vincent as part of an interest-free catastrophe financing program.

Adam Billing, a retired police officer who lived and tended to his crops on land near the volcano, said he had more than 3 acres of plantains, tannias, yams and a variety of fruits and estimates he lost more than \$9,000 worth of crops.

"We have to look at the next couple of months as it's not going to be a quick fix from the government."

The volcano, which had seen a low-level eruption since December, experienced the first of several major explosions on Friday morning, and volcanologists say activity could continue for weeks. □

## Philippines summons Chinese ambassador over reef dispute

By **JIM GOMEZ**

**Associated Press**

**MANILA, Philippines (AP)**

— The Philippine government summoned the Chinese ambassador to press its demand for Chinese vessels to immediately leave a reef claimed by Manila in the South China Sea and said their presence was stoking tensions, officials said Tuesday.

The escalating feud between Manila and Beijing started after more than 200 Chinese vessels suspected by Philippine authorities to be operated by militias were spotted early last month at Whitsun Reef. The Philippine government demanded the vessels leave then deployed coast guard and patrol vessels to the area but China said it owns the reef and the Chinese vessels were sheltering from rough seas.

After summoning Ambassador Huang Xilian on

Monday, Philippine Foreign Undersecretary Elizabeth Buensuceno expressed to him Manila's "displeasure over the illegal lingering presence of Chinese vessels around Julian Felipe Reef," the foreign affairs department said in a statement, using the Philippine name for Whitsun Reef in the most hotly disputed Spratlys region of the busy waterway.



**In this March 31, 2021, file photo provided by the National Task Force-West Philippine Sea, Chinese vessels are moored at Whitsun Reef, South China Sea.**

**Associated Press**

"The continuing presence of Chinese vessels around the reef is a source of regional tension," Buensuceno said.

She reiterated to Huang that the reef, which lies about 175 nautical miles (324 kilometers) west of the Philippine province of Palawan, is within an internationally recognized offshore zone where Manila has the exclusive right

to exploit fisheries, oil, gas and other resources.

She also cited a 2016 ruling in an international arbitration case the Philippines brought against China that invalidated Beijing's vast claims on historical grounds to virtually all of the South China Sea under a 1982 U.N. maritime treaty.

The Philippine military has said aerial surveillance showed some of the Chinese vessels have left the reef but more than 40 remained moored in the area in late March. It debunked China's claim that the vessels were sheltering from rough seas saying the weather has been fine around the reef.

The United States has said it would stand by the Philippines amid the standoff. The Department of National Defense in Manila said last week that the Philippines could seek the help of the U.S., with which it

has a mutual defense treaty, to protect its interests in the South China Sea.

The Philippines' high-profile protests against China over Whitsun has unfolded amid the cozier relations President Rodrigo Duterte nurtured with China after taking office in mid-2016. Duterte has been repeatedly criticized for not immediately demanding Chinese compliance with the 2016 arbitration ruling and taking a stronger stand against China's actions in the disputed waters.

The Spratly chain of islands, islets and atolls are claimed entirely or partly by China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei. China has turned seven disputed reefs into missile-protected island bases in recent years, ratcheting up tensions in what has long been feared as a potential flashpoint in Asia. □



# Muslims mark Ramadan amid virus surge and new restrictions

By AMR NABIL and NINIEK KARMINI

Associated Press

MECCA, Saudi Arabia (AP)

— Muslims in many parts of the world marked the start of Ramadan on Tuesday, but a spike in coronavirus cases in several countries has once again put curbs on the holy month's signature feasts and lengthy prayers in mosques.

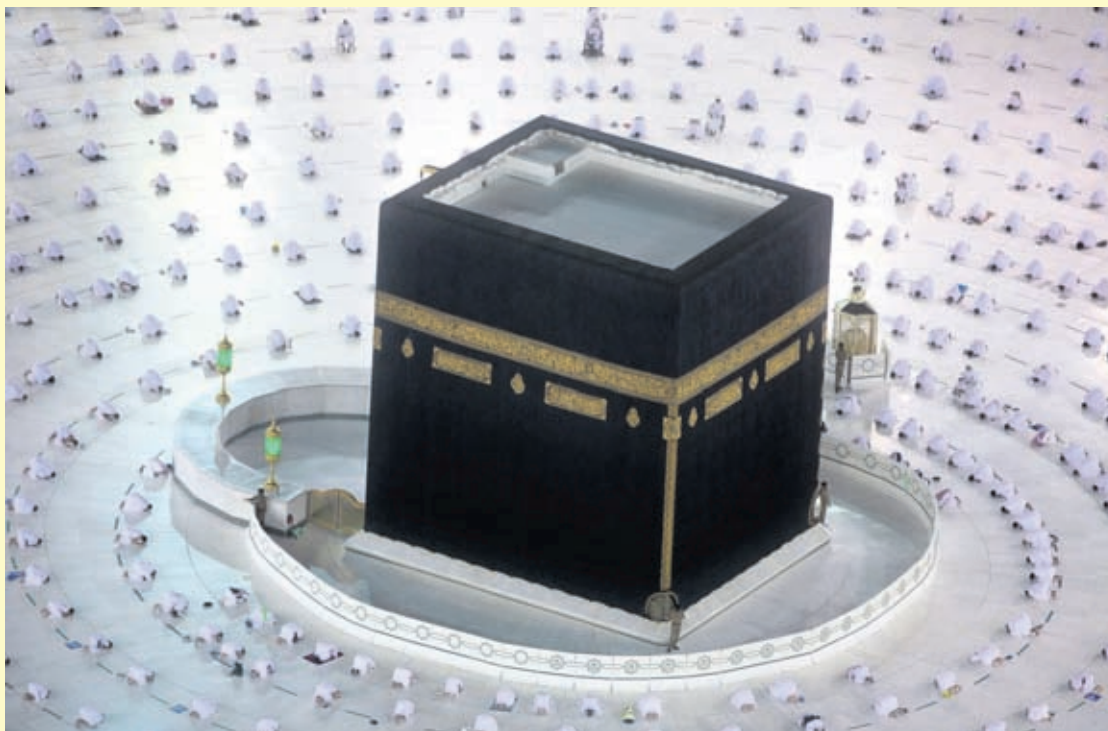
Still, there were glimmers that Ramadan 2021 could feel less restricted than last year, when Islam's holiest period coincided with the start of the coronavirus pandemic. Mosques have since reopened and limits on movement have eased as vaccine rollouts continue in Muslim-majority nations. Clerics in such places as Indonesia have issued assurances the vaccine does not break one's day-time fast.

Ramadan is marked by longer prayers, dawn-to-dusk fasting and nightly feasts with family and friends, though crowded shoulder-to-shoulder gatherings in mosques and large gatherings for meals remain prohibited due to the continued spread of coronavirus globally.

Throughout Ramadan, Muslims abstain from any food or drink including water from morning to night. The monthlong practice is aimed at heightening remembrance of God, curbing unhealthy habits and deepening gratitude.

In Mecca, home to the Kaaba, Islam's most sacred site, Muslims performed socially distanced "taraweeh" prayers, marking the start of Ramadan. Observant Muslims around the world pray toward the Kaaba five times a day.

Only limited numbers of worshippers were being allowed inside the Grand Mosque that houses the Kaaba to prevent the spread of the virus. Saudi authorities were only allowing individuals who've been vaccinated or recently recovered from the virus to perform taraweeh prayers at the Kaaba.



Muslims pray during the first dawn prayers of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, around the Kaaba, the cubic building at the Grand Mosque, as they keep social distancing to help curb the spread of the coronavirus, in the Muslim holy city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia, Tuesday, April 13, 2021.

Associated Press

In Lebanon, most Muslims began Ramadan on Tuesday amid soaring inflation. The small country is in the grips of the worst economic and financial crisis in its modern history, with the Lebanese currency losing some 80% of its value against the U.S. dollar in past months.

The crisis a result of decades of endemic corruption and mismanagement has been compounded by the coronavirus pandemic. Many people were having to scale back their Ramadan preparations.

"We cannot buy anything. We ask how much the lettuce is, the cucumber and the tomato," said Samiyeh al-Turk at a busy open air market in Beirut Monday. "How we are going to get through the month of Ramadan? I don't know," she added. Israel was allowing 10,000 fully vaccinated Palestinian residents of the West Bank to pray in the al-Aqsa mosque on the first Friday of Ramadan. The sacred mosque in Jerusalem is open for prayers during Ramadan amid Israel's rapid vaccination rollout.

"We hope that it will be a good month after the great setback that the whole world was exposed to," Jerusalem shop owner

Reyad Hallaq said.

In the densely populated Gaza Strip, a nighttime curfew is aimed at restricting family gatherings as the virus continues to spread there.

The restrictions mean that Bessan Mabhough may not see her parents and gather for iftar as they often would do several times during Ramadan.

"During the day, I'm also struggling with helping my children with their remote learning so I do not think this Ramadan will be nice away from my family," she said. In Iraq, a curfew will remain in place from 7 p.m. to 5 a.m. throughout Ramadan, with total lockdown on weekends. The Health Ministry warned that non-compliance with these measures could lead to three-day continuous lockdowns. Citing economic concerns for business owners, restaurants and pastry shops will be able to operate but solely through home deliveries.

Meanwhile, a 10-day lockdown due to increased infections went into effect on Tuesday in northeastern areas of Syria controlled by U.S.-backed fighters. The region, which borders Iraq and Turkey, is home to 5 million people.

In Indonesia, COVID-19 cases are also spiking. Mosques are being allowed to open for Ramadan prayers with strict protocols in place.

The government will allow people to hold "iftar" gatherings during Ramadan in restaurants, malls and cafes, which can open at 50% capacity. Iftar is the sought-after moment when Muslims traditionally break their daylong fast by eating dates and taking a sip of water before feasting with friends and family.

"Easing restrictions is like a breath of fresh air for us who are tired by this COVID-19 outbreak," said Anna Mardiyastuti, a resident in Indonesia's capital of Jakarta. "Yes, they should act to stop the virus, but not block the door to worship or change our tradition of Ramadan entirely."

In neighboring Muslim-majority Malaysia, Wan Noradriana Balqis, 21, welcomed the return of community prayers in mosques but said she will avoid busy Ramadan bazaars. Coronavirus cases in Malaysia have more than tripled since January.

"I don't think it's a good idea to reopen the bazaars. The rules are there but many people don't fol-

low them," the database administrative officer said. Vaccinations pose a challenge for Muslim nations administering shots throughout Ramadan. Officials were working to ease concerns over the Islamic teaching that Muslims should refrain "from anything entering the body" between sunrise and sunset.

Indonesia's top clerical council went so far as to say Muslims eligible for vaccinations are "required" to take the shots during Ramadan.

Governments, meanwhile, were also working to uphold some restrictions.

In India, where infections have peaked in recent days, scholars are appealing to the country's 200 million Muslims to follow anti-virus protocols and refrain from large gatherings. Many Indian cities dealing with virus surges have imposed nighttime curfews, and it remains unclear whether the faithful will be allowed to perform taraweeh prayers in mosques.

In Pakistan and Iran, fasting is expected to begin Wednesday.

The government of Prime Minister Imran Khan has refused to close mosques in Pakistan, even as new infections reach levels similar to the start of the pandemic. Mosque leaders are entrusted with ensuring no one over 50 years-old enters and that social distancing is maintained, but rarely do adherents follow these restrictions.

Muslims in Indian-controlled Kashmir continue to suffer from two back-to-back lockdowns that left tens of thousands without any means to earn their livelihoods. The disputed region, the only part of Hindu-dominated India that is majority Muslim, was under an unprecedented military lockdown in 2019 before coronavirus lockdowns were imposed last year. Local charities plan to distribute Ramadan ration kits for families in need. □



## COVID-19 tests now easier and more accessible!

**ORANJESTAD - Aiming to test as many Covid-19 symptomatic individuals as possible to stop the further spread of the virus, the Department of Public Health (DVG) introduced a new testing method that allows anyone with Covid-19-like symptoms to sign up for their test.**

Anyone with Covid-like symptoms and an MWV card can request their test

online at <http://arubacovid19.org/test> and must complete the application form. Once the form is completed, the automated system generates a code that is sent to the user via email, which the user must enter under the "test" icon in the Aruba Health App.

This is in addition to the conventional way of contacting their doctor or calling +297 2800101 for testing. Now there are 3 ways

to get tested for Covid19.

### Covid Status Update

There are currently 516 active Covid cases on the island. 435 residents and 81 non-residents. There are 43 persons hospitalized of which 18 of them are in the Intensive care unit. 92 persons lost their battle against the Covid virus. A total of 132.894 persons have been tested of which 87.194 were tested at the



airport. 92 persons lost the battle against Covid-19. A total of 40.194 persons registered for the vaccine of which 33.493 already re-

ceived the first dosage of Pfizer vaccine and 10.946 of them received the second dosage too. □

## Watch 'Ask Pilar': our videos show you the other Aruba



**ORANJESTAD — Today offers a series of videos 'Ask Pilar' on their Facebook page Aruba Today and on the website [www.arubatoday.com](http://www.arubatoday.com). Since the start, October 2019, more than 20 videos have been created. Let us introduce to you this project and present the people behind it.**

Why a video? Besides offering our free daily newspaper, posts on Facebook and Instagram and our website content, we started evaluating the plans for short video's about a year ago. The concept was created by Editor-in-Chief Linda Reijnders to add variety to the product Aruba Today. "There is more to this island than palm trees and beaches and in our

videos we wish to inform and educate the visitor by showing local places and characters of any kind. We are all new to this, the goal is not to deliver a technical perfect result, more to motivate our visitors with the places we visit as well as transmitting the good energy coming from it." As the title of the video 'Ask Pilar' already shows, the viewer has the opportunity to actually ask about the topics shown, or even suggest a location for a video. Just ask our host Pilar on Facebook and we will let you know.

Check us out on Facebook Aruba Today or the website [www.arubatoday.com](http://www.arubatoday.com) and do not forget to like and share! Thank you for your support. □



## IMSAN becomes a hospital



**SAN NICOLAS — At the beginning of this week the minister of Public Health, Mr. Dangui Oduber, together with the Prime Minister of Aruba, Evelyn Wever-Croes and the director of ImSan, dr. Joel Rajnherc, had the honor to inaugurate Instituto Medico San Nicolas, IMSAN, as a hospital. The hospital consists of 22 rooms assigned for short stays.**

The project is the result of months of planning and adaptation. The adaptation of ImSan into a hospital is seen as a success with the help of AZV and the cooperation of Dr. Horacio E. Oduber hospital. The Minister was able to reallocate the financ-

es necessary to make the project a reality. The expansion and renovation of this project was an investment of 60 million florins. This project goes hand in hand with the vision of providing a better medical care for our residents.

The hospital includes a department called Short stay. Here, patients can stay for a few days. It is not the intention that chronic patients will be staying in the hospital for more than 7 months. The intent is to provide patients who undergo more complicated surgeries and cannot go home immediately a place to stay for a few nights. Something that has proven to

be successful for over a year now. IMSAN also has a radiotherapy department that provides treatment to patient without having to send them abroad. The Radiology department also has a CT scan machine and 2 echo machines. The hospital also has an eye clinic equipped with the most update technology in eyecare.

There are two operating rooms to conduct the surgeries in and one room that is specifically for eyes. The operating rooms are equipped with sterilized instruments to use during surgery. The surgery department is primarily for problems concerning the eye, and for eye operations, however, there is also a part dedicated to regular surgery which entails surgeries conducted by orthopedic surgeons, neurosurgeons, and plastic surgeons.

This project is very beneficial for our community and marks an important step in the medical history of Aruba. □





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## Papillon restaurant: The butterfly effect of magnificent food

**PALM BEACH —** Do you remember the film “Papillon” starring Steve McQueen? Papillon restaurant is the island’s example where ‘life imitates art.’ The décor, especially the restrooms, was inspired by the movie. For more than a decade this restaurant has built a reputation with the fusion of classic French cuisine, Dutch and Caribbean flavors. Welcome in the world of wonders where ambiance, taste and service come together and you feel you are being welcomed in the home of the owner and her team.

“We find it really important that our guests have fun; can relax while listening to live music while their taste buds are being tickled by France, The Netherlands and the Caribbean. We offer a unique fusion of dishes and a night not to forget,” says owner Tina. She points out that all Covid-protocol is in place here, they are very keen on hygiene and offer outside dining on a cozy, elegant terrace with social distancing in place and right on the high-rise strip.

### Now: Early Bird & Live Music

New rules with regards to the Covid-19 situation will not prevent us from offering you a wonderful, gastronomic night. Papillon knows how to fly high and rises to the occasion with a beautiful combo of three courses including a glass of wine for only \$ 32 per person. This Early Bird is

on from 5pm to 7pm. It gets even better with live entertainment by the local star Marisela, praised for her amazing voice which she will bring to you on Mondays and Fridays. The talented tunes of Jairo’s saxophone enchant you on Tuesdays and Thursdays and each Saturday Venezuelan born musician Jose Herrera will show you why his name is established on the island and in Europe.

### Oysters, caviar and wild boar

You are on vacation, life is to enjoy! If you want something special, a different flow than the usual then Papillon is the place to go. Foodies are in heaven here with classic French dishes such as Foie Gras, Frog Legs, fresh Oysters coming in on a weekly basis with KLM, Escargots, Dover Sole à la Meunière flown in from Europe and filleted at the table, Duck Breast seared on the skin, roasted and braised Lamb in Balashi beer and slow braised Wild Boar Shank. Do not leave without trying the exclusive recommendation: Caviar! All of this combined with an extensive wine list from around the world makes Papillon a must-do on your Aruban vacation.

Tina: “Our chef is from Peru and at the moment we have the renowned guest chef Griet Vanbrabant who worked in Michelin star restaurants like El Bulli in Spain which happened to be the world’s best restaurant for many years and Pujol in Mexico. So this is the time to come over



and reserve your table.”

### Vegetarian vibes present

Impressive vegetarian/vegan dishes are set up especially for the guests by the chef and Meredith from Vegan Aruba. “We offer vegan choices that are really good and tasty. Our daily soup is always vegan too.” What are you waiting for, make sure to pay a visit to this elegant yet laid-back restaurant while on Aruba. You are most welcome!

Papillon Restaurant is located at The Village across the Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino and within walking distance of all other major hotels. □

### Make your reservation today at:

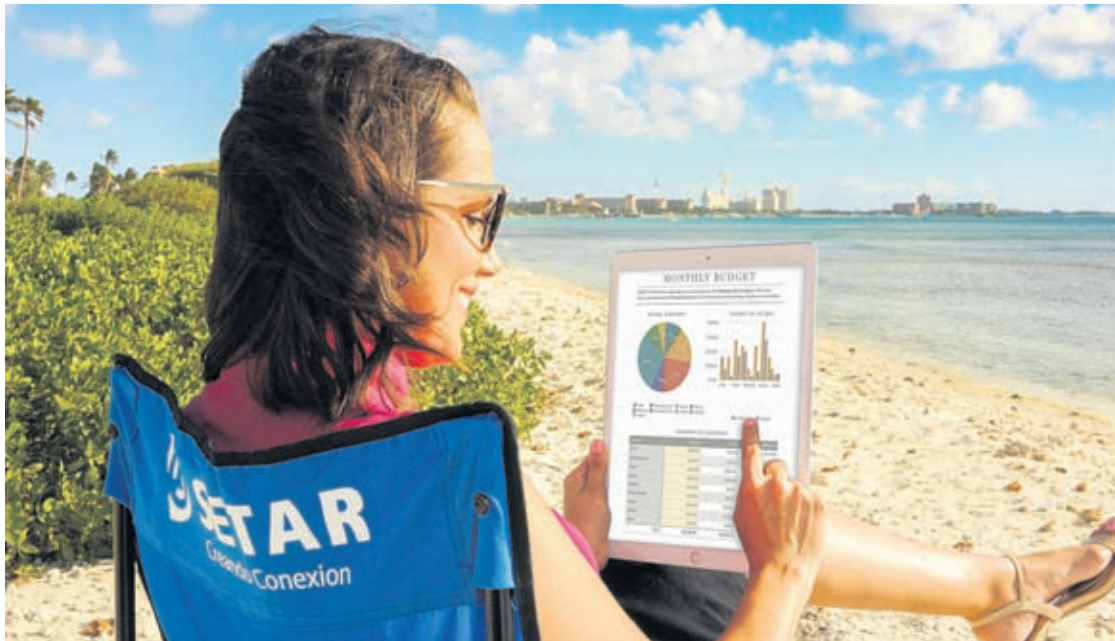
[info@papillonaruba.com](mailto:info@papillonaruba.com)  
or call/WhatsApp + 00297 699 5400  
Open Daily: 5pm – 9pm- Last seating at 7.30pm  
For all menus and specials visit the website:  
[www.papillonaruba.com](http://www.papillonaruba.com).



*Papillon*  
RESTAURANT



## Prepaid High-Speed Internet anywhere on the island



**ORANJESTAD —** Are you in Aruba for "Workation" and need high-speed Internet anywhere at any time? SETAR, Aruba's biggest telecom provider, offers you the fastest wireless Internet plans on an LTE network.

Work remotely on the beach via your tablet, laptop, or smartphone and enjoy faster upload and download speeds. SETAR Prepaid Wireless Broadband offers you a lower latency rate, meaning websites loads faster, YouTube does not pause every five seconds, and apps download at a higher speed, all using your Mi-Fi device.

SETAR Wireless Broadband Prepaid offers you Internet anywhere for a fixed fee without worrying about additional charges, and it is easy to use and access. Choose the bundle that suits your budget and needs.

Visit SETAR Teleshop with locations around the island or at the airport to check your Mi-Fi SIM or device. □

## Because music is for everyone

**ORANJESTAD —** Originally, music plays a very important role in the culture of Aruba. In schools, however, creative subjects such as art and music have come last and more importance is now attached to language and math lessons. The initiative that Leerorkest Nederland, learning orchestra, took a few years ago, and has now also brought to the Caribbean islands, aims to change this. We are convinced that creative subjects such as making music together are just as important as learning to count, write and read. Due to their home situation, many children often do not have the opportunity to take music lessons and / or learn to play an instrument. The Stichting Leerorkest Aruba would very much like to change this and together with the Leerorkest Nederland has made a start on Aruba.

### A musical and social project

Leerorkest Aruba aims to give all children in Aruba the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument, during and after school. It has now been scientifically proven that making music together is not only fun, but also very good for the total development of children. In this way they learn to work together, to build more self-confidence, but in addition, their creativity is stimulated, their brain learns to make other connections and they learn to listen to each other in a positive way, to take each other into account and to help each other.

'Music education has been shown to have a positive influence on IQ, learning performance, word analysis and phonological skills. There is

also preliminary evidence that music education can facilitate the learning of foreign languages.'

Quote from the chapter 'The value of arts education. Allegations and Evidences' (Ellen Winner, Stéphan Vincent-Lancrin).

### Accessible structure

By introducing a Learning Orchestra in the schools, we can set up an accessible structure within the schools so that all children have a chance to discover and develop their musical talents. The advantage is that the lessons will initially take place during school time.

Children receive weekly lessons from a passionate music teacher. A start is made with General Musical Education Lessons and this is gradually extended to the method of the Learning Orchestra: playing together on instruments in a real orchestra!

Children learn in a playful and fast way to learn to play the violin, cello, trumpet, trombone, flute or clarinet and then play together in a class orchestra!

The organization of the Leerorkest in Aruba is in the hands of the local organization Stichting Leerorkest Aruba (foundation: October 2019).

### Music for ALL Children

Aruba has three major school boards, namely DPS (Public Schools Service), SKOA (Foundation for Catholic Education Aruba) and SPCOA (Foundation for Protestant Christian Education Aruba).

In total there are about 41 regular primary schools in Aruba. Stichting Leerorkest Aruba hopes to one day be able to introduce the Leerorkest to all primary schools.

Leerorkest Aruba started a pilot on September 23, 2019 at four primary schools (three from SKOA and 1 from DPS). The instrument lessons are also given at two schools.

The headmasters and teachers are very enthusiastic that music lessons are finally coming back to school in the form of a Learning Orchestra! Leerorkest Aruba has chosen to start in the 2nd class with a preparatory series of general musical education, and to start in the 3rd class with the lessons on the instruments. We believe that



children who have a good basic musical education learn to play the instruments faster.

Due to the challenges of the Corona virus, it has been decided to start in the 2020-2021 school year with online lessons in general musical education. If the schools are (temporarily) closed, these lessons can in any case be continued within the home school.

Nora Eleonora, director of DPS, wholeheartedly endorses the goals of the Learning Orchestra. She is very happy with the start of the pilot project at one of their schools and hopes that the project will spread to other schools within the DPS board. About 25% of the primary schools on the island come under the DPS board.

Recently, a very positive consultation took place between Anuesca Baily of SKOA and Leerorkest Aruba, in which SKOA has indicated that they would like to start with the general musical education programme presented by the Leerorkest at all their schools (with about 7,000 children in total!). Finally the goal of the Leerorkest is getting closer: to offer music for ALL children. □





# Millennial Money: How my travel credit card saved me \$1,388

By **MELISSA LAMBARENA** of NerdWallet

In 2020, I was looking forward to leaving Los Angeles for a socially distanced vacation in San Diego. I had stocked up on food, hand sanitizer, wipes and masks. To stay safe and distant, I had booked two cottages near the beach with my travel credit card. My friend and his significant other would stay in one, and my roommate and I would take the other. That was the plan, until one friend tested positive for the coronavirus and had to isolate at home.

When the unexpected happens, a credit card's trip cancellation or trip interruption insurance may help you recover the cost of nonrefundable expenses. In my case, trip cancellation insurance saved me \$1,388. As you make travel plans in the vaccination era, get to know how these benefits can protect your travel fund.

## BENEFITS EXPLAINED

Trip cancellation and interruption insurance are often found on travel credit cards. A quick look through your card's benefits can confirm whether you have them. Payment networks like American Express, Visa and Mastercard offer these benefits, and insurance companies underwrite them.



This Aug. 11, 2019, file photo shows a Visa logo on a credit card in New Orleans.

Associated Press

Trip cancellation insurance may reimburse prepaid, nonrefundable travel expenses like airfare, hotels, cruises, tours and passenger fares, depending on the card's terms. Trip interruption may reimburse the unused portion of your trip for certain covered reasons. Terms vary.

To qualify, you must pay for eligible travel expenses with the card that offers the benefit. If you use credit card rewards to pay for a trip, purchases may still be covered, depending on the card. With Chase, for example, a spokesperson confirms that trip cancella-

tion insurance covers qualifying purchases booked with rewards earned on an eligible credit card.

Benefits like these may also change on credit cards, so to avoid unwanted surprises, review your card's terms and conditions prior to booking a trip.

## CIRCUMSTANCES THAT MAY QUALIFY

Insurance offered through a credit card extends to different circumstances. For example, unexpected illness and accidental bodily injury are the predominant cause for trip cancellation and trip interruption claims on eligible Mastercards,

said Ralf Riehl, director of loyalty solutions for Mastercard, in an email.

"In specific regard to COVID-19, these benefits do not provide coverage for fear of traveling to a specific destination, even for fear of illness or quarantine," he said. The terms I qualified for cited coverage that includes "sickness experienced by you or your traveling companion which prevents you or your traveling companion from traveling on the trip."

Depending on the card, other circumstances that may qualify for trip cancellation coverage include

physician-ordered quarantine, loss of life, severe weather that prevents travel, changes in military orders and jury duty, to name a few. Trip interruption may cover similar incidents.

## POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS

Coverage from your credit card may be secondary to any travel insurance policy you purchased or any reimbursements received from the travel provider or carrier. I had not purchased a travel insurance policy for my planned stay, but the short-term rental service reimbursed cleaning fees and taxes that I'd prepaid. It's generally good practice to book stays with a flexible cancellation policy during a pandemic, but I made an exception since side-by-side cottages were hard to find at a decent price. It's also worth noting that travel benefits on your card typically cover only up to a certain amount per person, for a maximum amount per year. If the cost of a trip exceeds your benefit's limits, consider purchasing a travel insurance policy.

Christina Dwiggin, content creator at travel blog Our Sweet Adventures, was spared by having these card benefits and an insurance policy a few years ago when she and her husband were hospitalized while vacationing with her sister in Peru. □

# Bally's buying Tropicana hotel on Las Vegas Strip for \$308M

By **KEN RITTER**

Associated Press

**LAS VEGAS (AP)** — The Tropicana Las Vegas Hotel and Casino is being sold. Bally's Corp. announced Tuesday it will acquire the iconic Las Vegas Strip property from Gaming and Leisure Properties Inc. for about \$308 million.

The agreement for the nearly 1,500-room hotel, casino, theater and convention property also involves a sale-and-leaseback transaction relating to Bally's Black Hawk, Colorado, and Rock Island, Illinois, casino properties, the company said.

"Landing a preeminent spot on the Las Vegas Strip is a key step for us," George Papanier, Bally's president and CEO, said in a statement.

He noted Las Vegas draws more than 40 million tourists a year and said owning the Tropicana will boost Rhode Island-based Bally's customer and player databases, unlock marketing opportunities and benefit Bally's online and interactive business.

The transaction is expected to close early next year.

Bally's owns and manages 12 casinos in eight states, and said it is set to own and manage 15 casinos in 11 states after several acquisitions are completed.

Bally's is already licensed as a casino operator in Nevada, and purchased the Mont-Bleu Resort near Lake Tahoe from Caesars Entertainment Inc. earlier this month.

The 22-story Tropicana opened in April 1957. It is on a 35-acre parcel at a Las Vegas Boulevard intersection named for it. It has been operated as a DoubleTree by Hilton. □



In this Aug. 4, 2015, file photo, sunlight illuminates a sign at the Tropicana hotel and casino in Las Vegas.

Associated Press



# Swiss program plots post-COVID future for science, diplomacy

**By JAMEY KEATEN**  
**Associated Press**  
**GENEVA (AP)** — With COVID-19, space exploration and climate change high on many minds, a so-called “do tank” in Geneva, bankrolled by Switzerland’s government, is gearing up to develop long-term scientific projects, ranging from a global court for scientific disputes to a Manhattan Project-style effort to rid excess carbon from the atmosphere.

Backers of the Geneva Science and Diplomacy Anticipator want to bridge the Swiss city’s image as a hub for conflict resolution with visionary scientific ambitions on big-picture issues, including the future of humanity.

First created in late 2019, GESDA presented its first activity report Tuesday and announced plans for a summit in October bringing together hundreds of United Nations officials, Nobel laureates, academics, diplomats, advocacy group representatives and members of the public.



In this April 6, 2017 taken photo former Nestle’s Chairman Peter Brabeck-Letmathe speaks during the general meeting of the world’s biggest food and beverage company, Nestle Group, in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Associated Press

The initiative’s backers include the heads of top Swiss universities and of the world’s largest atom smasher, located at European nuclear research organization CERN. They say

lives and quashed economies to encourage thinking about the interplay among science, politics and society. Peter Brabeck, a former chairman and CEO of Nestle who was tapped by the Swiss government to lead GESDA, used COVID-19 as an example of how advance planning could help head off future health crises, noting that the mRNA vaccine technology being used now to fight the pandemic has been around a decade.

“We could have perhaps been more prepared for the pandemic than we were today,” Brabeck said from GESDA headquarters at Geneva’s Campus Biotech. “Only a scientific breakthrough is not enough. It has to be embedded in a diplomatic framework so that it can be implemented” by governments and companies.

“Technology is advancing at an incredible speed. But the framework around it — diplomacy — is slower than ever, so we have to find a way that we can accelerate the diplomacy also,” he said. The pandemic has featured vaccine nationalism, political squabbles and mutual recriminations between China — where the coronavirus first emerged — and the United States, which is experiencing the world’s most deadly outbreak. The reputation of the World Health Organization also has suffered.

“I would not pretend that GESDA could avoid such a confrontation as happened in the World Health Organization,” Brabeck said. “What GESDA can do is basically to call attention before this thing escalates... (and) if diplomacy would come in before the fact, a lot of these conflicts might be resolved.”

While seed money came from the Swiss government, GESDA counts academics from places like South Africa and a top health ministry official in Singapore among board members, and is seeking outside funding and has been talking with charitable foundations. □

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**Conceptis Sudoku** By Dave Green

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Difficulty Level ★★★ 4/14

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**EU lacking sufficient electric cars charging infrastructure**

**By SAMUEL PETREQUIN**  
**Associated Press**  
**BRUSSELS (AP)** — In line with its ambition to make Europe a greener place, the European Union wants to drastically reduce gas emission from transport by 2050 and promote electric cars. But according to a report from the bloc’s external auditor, it is lacking the appropriate charging stations.

“Last year, one in every ten cars sold in the EU was electrically chargeable, but charging infrastructure is unevenly accessible across the EU,” said Ladislav Balko, the member of the European Court of Auditors in charge of the report published Tuesday.

“We think that the Commission should do more to support EU-wide network coverage, and ensure

that funding goes where it is most needed.”

Transport accounts for about 25% of all greenhouse gas emissions in the EU. The bloc has set itself the goal to cut greenhouse gas emissions from transport by 90 % compared with 1990 levels as part of its effort to be-

come climate-neutral by mid-century.

Noting that an essential part of this strategy is the switch to lower-carbon fuels and electricity, auditors said it’s now crucial to speed up the deployment of charging infrastructure “to promote breakthrough in electro-mobility.” □

A photograph showing a long line of silver Tesla Model S cars parked in a row, each connected to a charging cable, outside a Tesla dealership.

This Aug. 23, 2020 photo shows a long line of unsold 2020 models charge outside a Tesla dealership in Littleton, Colo.

Associated Press



# Classifieds

## Divi Phoenix Villas

Studio WK # 16 and 17  
Room # 102 right on beach  
32 weeks remain ( DVC Points contract  
Price : \$9K Both weeks  
( 115,000 ) Call : (630-1307)  
johnnypaesch@gmail.com

## Divi Village Resort

Studio Week 13 room # 6206  
Studio Week 14 room # 6205  
Ocean view 21 weeks remain  
Price : \$ 8 K each.  
Call: 011-(297) 630-1307  
johnnypaesch@gmail.com

## Costa Linda Beach Resort

2 BR WK # 16 Room # 1010  
Ground floor Right on Eagle Beach  
Price : \$10 K  
Call: (297) 630-1307  
johnnypaesch@gmail.com

## Costa Linda Beach Resort

2 BR wk # 18 room # 3030  
Pool/ Ocean View \$8,5 K  
Rent date : 30 to 5 May 2021  
\$1300 Call : (297)630-1307  
johnnypaesch@gmail.com

## Marriott Ocean Club

GOLD  
1 BR Ocean View \$ 5 K  
2 BR Ocean View \$ 7 K  
PLATINUM  
1 BR Ocean View \$10 K  
2 BR Ocean Front \$ 26 K  
Call : (297)630-1307  
johnnypaesch@gmail.com

## Costa Linda Beach Resort

2 Br wk #15 room # 1012  
Ground floor right on the beach  
Price : \$ 13 K  
Call : (297)630-1307  
johnnypaesch@gmail.com

## Marriott Surf Club

GOLD  
2 BR Garden View \$ 6K  
2 BR Ocean View \$ 8 K  
Platinum  
2 BR Ocean View \$ 17 K  
2 BR Ocean Side \$ 18 K  
2 BR Garden View\$ 16 K  
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## Villa Las Palmas

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With Garge  
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## Le Vent Condo

3 Bedroom , 2 Bath, Full Furnish  
Across Eagle Beach, Ground floor  
Price : \$650 K  
Call: (297)630-1307  
johnnypaesch@gmail.com

## Gold Coast Condo

2 Bedroom , 2 Bath ,  
Full Furnish  
Price : \$ 320 K  
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johnnypaesch@gmail.com

## House For sale

In Savaneta  
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5 min walk to Ocean  
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# Artist gives nature a ‘cosmic’ twist in big NY garden show

By **KATHERINE ROTH**  
**Associated Press**

An expansive new show featuring works by Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama, famous for mesmerizing polka dots, speckled pumpkins and fascination with the natural world, has opened at The New York Botanical Garden. Ticket sales have been brisk in a pandemic-weary city hungry for more outdoor cultural events. “Kusama: Cosmic Nature,” postponed by a year due to the coronavirus, will remain on view through Halloween. Most of the artworks are outdoors and are big enough to enjoy while remaining socially distanced. Visitors will want to wear their walking shoes; the show features multiple galleries, installations and gardens. Elaborate flower displays complement some of the works, which are scattered over the 250-acre botanical garden in the Bronx. The setting could not be more suitable for Kusama’s multifaceted works, all of which relate in various ways to the world of nature. Having grown up in the greenhouses and fields of her family’s enormous seed nursery in Matsumoto, Japan, Kusama has always focused her work on the natural world, says guest curator Mika Yoshitake. “For Kusama, cosmic nature is a life force that in-



People walk by one of Yayoi Kusama’s pumpkin sculptures at the New York Botanical Garden, Thursday, April 8, 2021 in New York.

tegrates the terrestrial and celestial orders of the universe from both the micro- and macrocosmic perspectives,” Yoshitake says. When Kusama was young, she began having vivid hallucinations, some of which involved polka dots or flowers spreading around her. “Some people get stuck on the polka dots. Her work has a sort of internal sadness combined with an external joy, which really speaks to the current moment,” says Karen Daubmann, vice president for exhibitions and audience engagement at the garden. Works debuting at the exhibit include the 16-foot-high

painted bronze “Dancing Pumpkin” (2020), which appears to frolic happily on the Haupt Conservatory Lawn; “I Want to Fly the Universe” (2020), a brightly colored 13-foot-high biomorphic form installed near the Visitor’s Center; and “Infinity Mirrored Room - Illusion Inside the Heart” (2020), an outdoor installation reflecting its surroundings. Three galleries in the Conservatory feature horticultural celebrations of Kusama. Towering polka-dotted flowers in “My Soul Blooms Forever” (2019) greet visitors in the palm gallery. Nearby, the pink and gold mosaic “Starry Pumpkin” (2015) is

surrounded by woodland flowers and foliage in complementary pastels. And to complement the bold colors of Kusama’s painting “Alone, Buried in a Flower Garden” (2014) is a display of seasonal flowers and foliage designed to be equally strong in shape and color. Highlights elsewhere in the garden include “Narcissus Garden” (1966/2021), composed of 1,400 stainless steel spheres installed in a water feature, and “Ascension of the Polka Dots on the Trees” (2002/2021), which features soaring trees, their trunks wrapped in bright red fabric with white polka dots.

**Associated Press**

In the garden’s library, an exhibit includes sketches, paintings, collages and sculptures by Kusama, including a 1945 sketchbook she kept, at age 16. It’s full of meticulous, realistic drawings of plants. Also on view is her “Infinity Net” painting, inspired by the Pacific Ocean as viewed from an airplane; the work was exhibited at the Whitney Museum in 1961. A small photo exhibit focuses on Kusama’s life in New York, where she lived from around 1958, doing performance art pieces among other works before returning to Japan in 1973. Kusama, 92, now divides her time between the Japanese mental hospital where she has lived voluntarily since the 1970s and her nearby studio. She has not traveled to the United States since 2012. Her installations were completed with help from a team with which she works closely; they reviewed the works’ placement with Kusama using photos. Various galleries in New York and Tokyo that represent Kusama also participated. The Garden and Galleries Pass, which allows access to the Kusama show, is already sold out for some weekends, although there is still availability on weekdays, according to the botanical garden. □

## Mick Jagger and Dave Grohl team up for a pandemic anthem

By **MARK KENNEDY**  
**AP Entertainment Writer**  
**NEW YORK (AP)** — Mick Jagger and Dave Grohl have teamed up for a hard-rock pandemic anthem called “Eazy Sleazy.”

“It’s a song that I wrote about coming out of lockdown, with some much needed optimism,” Jagger said in a statement Tuesday. “Thanks to Dave Grohl for jumping on drums, bass and guitar. It was a lot of fun working with him.” The duo recorded the song and video in different studio locations — Jagger at home and Grohl in the



Musician Mick Jagger of The Rolling Stones performs in East Rutherford, N.J. on Aug. 1, 2019, left, Dave Grohl of the Foo Fighters performs at Pilgrimage Music and Cultural Festival in Franklin, Tenn. on Sept. 22, 2019.

**Associated Press**

Foo Fighters studio — and the lyrics mention “prison walls,” “virtual premieres,” numbers that are “grim” and Zoom calls. Jagger complains: “I’ve got nothing left to wear.” The song also name-checks Bill Gates, lampoons conspiracy theories and those who deny climate change and gleefully reveals “There’s aliens in the deep state.” But there seems to be hope. Jagger looks ahead and sees a “garden of earthly delights” when vaccines are administered and lockdown ends.

“Everything’s gonna get really freaky/Alright on the night/Soon it’ll be a memory/You’re trying to remember to forget.” □

9	5	6	4	3	1	2	8	7
7	2	4	8	9	5	1	6	3
1	8	3	7	6	2	5	9	4
2	4	8	6	5	3	9	7	1
6	1	7	9	2	4	3	5	8
3	9	5	1	8	7	4	2	6
8	3	2	5	1	6	7	4	9
4	6	1	2	7	9	8	3	5
5	7	9	3	4	8	6	1	2

Difficulty Level ★★★ 4/14



# Immediately eligible: NCAA on verge of transfer rule change

By **RALPH D. RUSSO**

**AP College Sports Writer**

Whether it is the start of free agency in college sports or simply the fair thing to finally do for the athletes, the NCAA is about to make a monumental change to its transfer rules.

The Division I Council meets Wednesday and Thursday, and the agenda includes voting on a proposal that would grant all college athletes the ability to transfer one time as undergraduates without having to then sit out a season of competition.

All indications are the proposal will pass. When it does, athletes in football, men's and women's basketball, baseball and men's ice hockey will for the first time be immediately eligible to play after switching schools without asking for special permission.

For decades, the penalty of giving up a year of eligibility helped deter athletes from transferring, at least in those high-profile sports. In all other NCAA sports, athletes were allowed to switch schools once before graduating and play immediately.

The exception will soon be available to everyone — which is likely to mean more transfers than ever. South Dakota State athletic director Justin Sell, a member of the council, said the lack of uniformity in the rules across sports had become difficult to justify.

"Trying to create opportunities for students that



Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields throws during an NFL Pro Day at Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, in this Tuesday, March 30, 2021, file photo.

Associated Press

are equitable across the board, it becomes much more difficult to create a case of why a football student-athlete should be sitting out when a volleyball student-athlete doesn't have to," Sell said.

The NCAA has been examining its rules regarding athletes who transfer seemingly forever. But three and a half years ago Sell was put in charge of a working group tasked with making substantive changes.

From that, the transfer portal was created and athletes no longer had to ask for permission to be released from their scholarships if they wanted to switch schools and receive financial aid. No longer

could coaches stand in the way if a player wanted to leave or dictate where they could go.

Sell's group considered the idea of lifting the year-in-residence rule, which forced athletes to sit out the year after transferring, but never quite got there.

"We walked right up to this question ... but the Rice Commission report (on college basketball) came out and they asked that no further action be taken on transfers at the time," said Mid-American Conference Commissioner Jon Steinbrecher, who was part of the working group. "So boom, we walk up to the question and then we stop."

Instead, the waiver process

was tweaked to allow athletes to receive immediate eligibility by showing a hardship of some sort that necessitated the transfer. That led to problems.

Some high-profile players such as quarterback Justin Fields, who transferred from Georgia to Ohio State in 2019, were granted waivers by the NCAA, creating an expectation that all players would be cleared to play right away.

When that didn't happen, players, coaches and fans criticized the NCAA and claimed the waiver process was inconsistent and unfair. A working group led by Steinbrecher concluded that waivers were no solution.

"There was a broad segment of the membership that recognized that ultimately, what we needed to get to, is a legislative solution. Not a patchwork of waivers," said Steinbrecher, who is also a member of the DI Council.

The council was set to vote on the legislative solution in January, but the Justice Department warned the NCAA its rule changes regarding transfers and name, image and likeness compensation might violate antitrust laws. NIL reform is still bogged down, but there is optimism the council can move forward on transfer rules.

If not, the council is prepared to pass a blanket waiver that would give all athletes transferring this year immediate eligibility. That is not the preferred route.

"I think the messaging or the language that I've heard from the council is they are looking to get to a permanent solution if at all possible," Steinbrecher said.

The main issue still to be hammered out are deadline dates for athletes to notify their schools they intend to transfer. Dates under consideration now are May 1 for fall and winter sport athletes and July 1 for spring sports.

"Transfers affect the other kids on the roster, too," Sell said. "Kids want to know who their starting point guard is. Or their starting shortstop." □

## Indians 1B Chang receives racist tweets after making error

By **TOM WITHERS**

**AP Sports Writer**

**CLEVELAND (AP)** — Indians first baseman Yu Chang shared some racist tweets he received after making a costly error in Monday night's game in Chicago. Chang, who is Taiwanese, posted some of the anti-Asian tweets on his Twitter account Tuesday while asking for tolerance. One of the messages referred to the shape of his eyes and another referred to

the coronavirus.

"Exercise your freedom of speech in a right way, I accept all comments, positive or negative but DEFINITELY NOT RACIST ONES," Chang wrote. "Thank you all and love you all." He included the hashtag StopAsianHate.

Soon after his posting, Chang received an outpouring of positive responses and support from Indians fans and others across social media.

The 23-year-old who came up as a middle infielder in Cleveland's organization is playing first base for the first time this season. The Indians signed him as a free agent in 2013.

With the game tied 3-3 in the ninth inning and the White Sox threatening with two runners on base, Chang fielded a ground ball and attempted to get the force-out at second but hit Chicago's Yasmani Grandal in the helmet. □



Cleveland Indians' Yu Chang tosses the ball to pitcher Aaron Civale to get Detroit Tigers' Akil Baddoo out at first base during the fifth inning of a baseball game in Cleveland, Saturday, April 10, 2021.

Associated Press



# Injuries wreaking more havoc than virus protocols

By **KYLE HIGHTOWER**  
AP Sports Writer

As teams gear up for the stretch run of the NBA regular season, it's injuries to key players — not just their unavailability due to COVID-19 — that is having the biggest effect on the playoff race in both conferences. Still, preparing to play outside of the controlled atmosphere of last season's Florida bubble has helped teams brace for the unexpected.

When the NBA season tipped off in December, keeping players healthy as they traveled during the pandemic was the chief priority around the league. In the four months since then, virtually every team has made adjustments to their rotation because of league-wide health and safety protocols.

"With COVID and with the way the season has gone, everybody's missing games," 76ers center Joel Embiid said. "COVID has affected the whole league. ... It's hard to kind of figure out when the team is at their best."

Lately, it's been injuries and not the virus that has dictated how the season has gone. That starts with the defending champion Lakers, who continue to be without team cornerstones LeBron James and Anthony Davis with no clear idea of when they will return.

Davis was averaging 22.5 points and 8.4 rebounds through 23 games when



Los Angeles Lakers center Marc Gasol, forward Kyle Kuzma, forward Anthony Davis and forward LeBron James sit on the bench during the first half of the team's NBA basketball game against the Brooklyn Nets, Saturday, April 10, 2021, in New York

Associated Press

he strained his right calf Feb. 14 against Denver. He hasn't played since, a span of 25 games entering Monday. He is expected to get re-evaluated this week.

James' sprained right ankle has kept him sidelined since March 21 and he could be three more weeks from returning. It stunted a 41-game start in which he was averaging 25.4 points and 7.9 assists and rebounds per game.

Another blow was dealt to Western Conference contender Denver, which learned Tuesday that its versatile point guard Jamal Murray would be out indefinitely with a torn ACL in his left knee. Murray was injured late in a loss

to Golden State Monday night. The Nuggets were looking to again be a legitimate threat a season after making to the conference finals. The story is just as fascinating in the topsy-turvy and increasingly tightening East, where almost every team in the playoff mix has players currently on — or just getting off — the injury report. Philadelphia and Brooklyn began the week tied at atop the conference at 36-17, with Milwaukee (33-20) three games back. Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo missed his fifth straight game Sunday with a sore left knee and currently has no timetable for return. The Nets seemed to be getting back to full

strength earlier this month when Kevin Durant returned to action after a 23-game absence due to a strained left hamstring. Then James Harden went down with a right hamstring on April 5.

He's missed Brooklyn's last two games and was expected to miss at least 10 days recuperating. That could mean he won't be available for matchups this week when it visits Philadelphia on Wednesday, host Charlotte on Friday and visit Miami on Sunday.

All three of those opponents are dealing with their own health issues.

Embiid proclaimed "I'm back" to 76ers coach Doc Rivers last week following

a 35-point performance against Boston in only his second game back from a 10-game stint in the injury report because of a bone bruise in his left knee.

Fourth place Atlanta is missing Trae Young (bruised left calf), Cam Reddish (sore right Achilles tendon) and Tony Snell (sprained right ankle). Miami is holding on to fifth, but lost Victor Oladipo to a right knee injury during its win over the Lakers on April 8.

And Charlotte is clinging to sixth place in East is without three of its stop scorers in LeMelo Ball (out with broken right wrist since March 22), Gordon Hayward (sprained right foot; out since April 4) and Malik Monk (out since April 2 with a sprained right ankle).

While the return of players like James and Davis will provide an instant lift for a Lakers offense that runs through them, the integration process is trickier for other teams.

Rivers said he expects there will still be some growing pains for his team as a whole as they adjust to playing with Embiid again.

"When you get a player like Joel back and you throw him into your offense, it's actually going to create some short time rhythm problems," Rivers said. "We have to try to win games still and get his rhythm back at the same time."

In Los Angeles, the Lakers hope that process will be a short one. □

## Olympic baseball qualifying in West Palm Beach, St. Lucie

By The Associated Press

The United States' delayed second chance at qualifying for the Olympic baseball tournament has been moved to the spring training home of the Houston Astros and the Washington Nationals and the exhibition ballpark of the New York Mets.

The Baseball Americas Qualifier will be played on the east coast of Florida in West Palm Beach and Port St. Lucie from May 31 to June 5, the World Baseball

Softball Confederation said Tuesday.

The tournament originally was scheduled for March 22-26, 2020, in Surprise and Tempe, Arizona, but was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic. Former Los Angeles Angels manager Mike Scioscia will attempt to qualify the U.S. for the Olympics with a yet-to-be-announced roster of minor leaguers and released players. Only players not on 26-man major league rosters and

injured lists will be eligible. Scioscia is the third U.S. manager this Olympic cycle following Joe Girardi and Scott Brosius.

The U.S. plays the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and Nicaragua in Group A, and the top two teams advance to the super round along with two teams from Group B, which includes Canada, Colombia, Cuba and Venezuela.

The top team from the super round joins Japan, Israel, Mexico and South

Korea at the Olympic baseball tournament, to be played from July 28 to Aug. 7 in Fukushima and Yokohama.

Second- and third-place teams advance to a final qualifier in June in Taiwan, which will include Australia, China, Netherlands and Taiwan.

The U.S. was three outs from qualifying for the Olympics in November 2019 at the Premier12 tournament in Tokyo when it wasted a ninth-inning lead

and lost to Mexico 3-2 in 10 innings.

Baseball is returning to the Olympics after being dropped for 2012 and 2016. Cuba won the gold medal in 1992, 1996 and 2004, the United States in 2000 and South Korea in 2008.

Baseball is likely to be dropped for the 2024 Olympics in Paris and then restored again for 2028 in Los Angeles. □